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ABSTRACT

Do educators' descriptions of healthy, mature, socially competent individuals differ as a function of the sex of the person judged? Does the sex of the educator have an effect on the use of sex-role stereotypes? The Stereotype Questionnaire was administered to 126 instructors from every level of education, with instructions to describe a healthy, mature, socially competent adult male, adult female, or adult. The results supported five general conclusions: (1) high agreement exists among educators concerning the attributes of mature males, females and adults; (2) educators' concepts of health, maturity, and social competence differ for men and women; (3) these differences parallel common sex-role stereotypes which assign less social value to the feminine role; (4) educators are less likely to attribute characteristics of mature adults to a woman than they are to a man; and (5) female educators see women as coming significantly closer to the adult standard than do male educators. Possible explanations for this double standard are discussed. (Author/PC)

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SEX-ROLE STEREOTYPES AND EDUCATORS' DESCRIPTIONS OF MATURE PERSONALITY[1]

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Abstract

Do educators' descriptions of healthy, mature, socially competent individuals differ as a function of the sex of the person judged? Does the sex of the educator have an effect on the use of sex-role stereotypes? The Stereotype Questionnaire (Rosenkrantz, Vogel, Bee, Broverman, & Broverman, 1968) was administered to 126 instructors (42 each at the elementary, secondary, and college levels) each with one of three sets of instructions: describe a healthy, mature, socially competent (a) adult male, (b) adult female, or (c) adult.

Two sets of analyses were carried out. First, a 3x3 (instruction sets x teaching levels) fixed effects factorial analysis of variance and multiple comparisons were calculated, and second, three separate t tests were used to compare mean differences between male and female instructors for each of the three different instructional sets.

The results presented in Tables 1 through 4 support five general conclusions:

(1) High agreement exists among educators at all levels of instruction concerning the attributes which characterize healthy, mature, socially competent adults, adult males, and adult females, respectively.

(2) Educators' concepts of health, maturity, and social competence differ for men and women.

(3) These differences parallel common sex-role stereotypes found by previous investigators, and generally assign less social value, or social desirability, to the feminine role.

(4) Educators are significantly less likely to attribute characteristics which describe mature adults to a woman than they are likely to attribute these characteristics to a man.

(5) Female educators, while also describing women as somewhat less than mature adults, nevertheless do see women as coming significantly closer to the adult standard than do male educators.

Possible reasons for, and effects of, this double standard of health and maturity among educators were also discussed.

References

Rosenkrantz, P., Vogel, S., Bee, H., Broverman, I., & Broverman, D. Sex-role stereotypes and self-concepts in college students. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 1968, 32, 287-295.

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1. Paper presented at the meetings of the Western Psychological Association, San Francisco, April 27, 1974.
2. Now a Ph.D. candidate in Educational Psychology, Stanford University.

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TABLE 1
Analysis of Variance Summary for Data in Table 2

Source	df	SS	MS	F	ω^2
Instructions	2	8015.35	4007.68	74.41*	.529
Teaching Level	2	117.35	58.68	1.09	.0006
I x L	4	454.65	113.66	2.11	.016
Within Cells	117	6301.29	53.86		
Total	125	14888.64			

* $p < .001$

TABLE 2
Means and Standard Deviations of Raw Scores from the Stereotype Questionnaire for the 3 x 3 ANOVA*

Teaching Level	Elementary			Secondary			College - Univ.		
Instruction Set	A	M	F	A	M	F	A	M	F
Mean	8.9	8.3	-3.6	10.9	12.1	-5.3	9.9	11.7	-11.0
SD	6.5	7.4	8.9	3.7	6.2	7.7	6.2	7.7	8.0

* 14 subjects per cell

TABLE 3
Differences Between Means for Adult vs. Male and vs. Female Instructions*

Instruction Set	Male	Adult	Female
Mean	10.7	9.6	-6.6
SD	7.4	5.9	8.9
$\underline{t}$	.717	-9.888**	

* 42 subjects per group
** $p < .01$

Figure 1

Means of Raw Scores from the Stereotype Questionnaire for Elementary, High School, and College Teachers

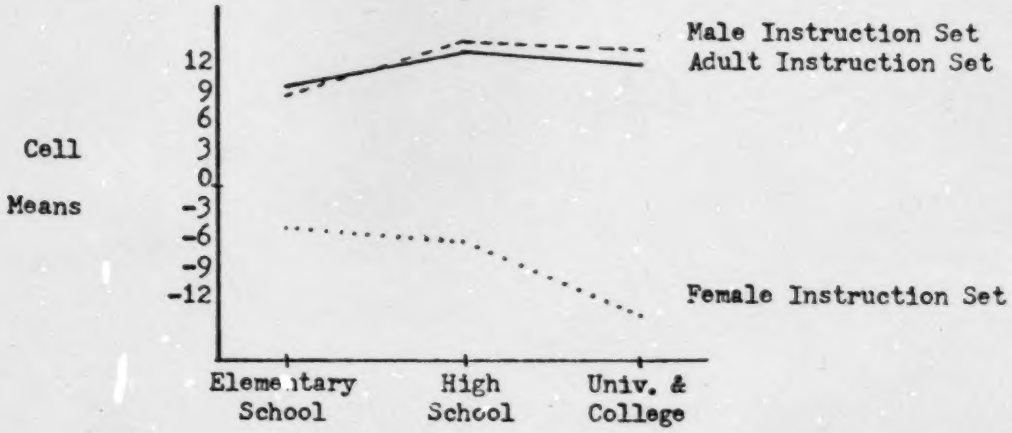


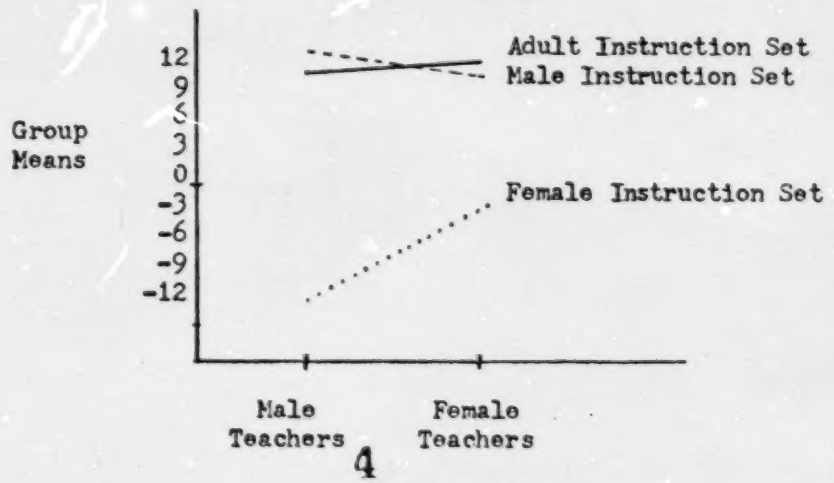
TABLE 4
Differences Between Means for Male and for Female Teachers

Instruction Set	Adult		Male		Female	
Sex of S	M	F	M	F	M	F
Mean	9.5	10.4	11.7	9.4	-9.5	-2.0
SD	6.2	5.1	7.3	7.2	7.5	8.0
N	22	20	24	18	26	16
t	.499		.992		2.872*	

* $p < .01$ with 40 df

Figure 2

Means of Raw Scores from the Stereotype Questionnaire for Male and Female Teachers



Sex-Role Stereotypes and Educators' Descriptions of Mature Personality[1]

Lynne Gray Garman

It is possible today, and even likely, for a woman to be considered an outstanding student, but how often is she thought of as being likely to make an outstanding contribution to society - other than by mothering an outstanding male child?

We are witnessing a growing awareness of the damage that can be done to individual growth by channeling it into narrowly defined sex-roles, but contrary to what we might expect from the explosion of concern for women in both the popular and the academic press, women today are not even holding their own in many important areas. In 1930, for example, one-half of all professional and semi-professional workers in the United States were women. By the early 1960's only about one-third were women, and four out of five of these were in just seven fields: teaching, nursing, social work, music, accounting, secretarial work, and library work.

From 1950 to 1970 the percentage of women in managerial jobs with manufacturing firms dropped from 8% to 6%. Women's earnings have also fallen farther behind the incomes of their male colleagues in the past fifteen years. In 1956, the average full-time female employee earned 63% as much as the average male worker; in 1971 she grossed only 59% as much. This relative decline in employment status among American women is matched by a similar decline in the achievement of higher degrees. In the 1930's, two out of every five B.A.'s and M.A.'s were earned by women. This figure has dropped to one in three. The figures for Ph.D.'s earned by women have gone from one in seven to one in ten.

It seems rather obvious that a tremendous resource is being wasted, and it is therefore of great importance that attention be given to those factors which affect sex-role stereotypes and the concomitant negative evaluation of women.

Several recent studies have sought to investigate the nature and degree of stereotyping which occures in various selected populations. One such study chose practicing psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers,

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1. Paper read at the meetings of the Western Psychological Association, San Francisco, April 27, 1974. A more comprehensive version is soon to be submitted for publication.

and concluded that a double standard of mental health exists for men and women. Behaviors and characteristics judged healthy by the clinicians for an adult of unspecified sex closely resembled characteristics judged healthy for men, but differed significantly from characteristics judged healthy fo. women.

The present study is concerned with educators. As respected professionals entrusted with a good part of the socialization of our children, teachers undoubtedly exert an influence on social standards and attitudes. Because a large portion of a young person's life is spent in school, the messages transmitted to the child there can be assumed to affect his or her development. If this can be granted, it becomes worthwhile to ask to what extent our educators accept these sex-role stereotypes, at least implicitly, and in so doing possibly help to perpetuate them. The primary hypothesis of this study was that educators' judgments about the characteristics of healthy, mature individuals would differ as a function of the sex of the person judged, and that these differences would parallel common sex-role stereotypes.

A previously developed instrument known as the Stereotype Questionnaire was used for this research. Briefly, it consists of 38 bipolar items, each of which describes a particular behavior trait. Some examples are:

aggressive	vs not aggressive
blunt	vs tactful
objective	vs subjective

One pole of each item can be characterized as typically masculine, the other as typically feminine.

Each S was given a questionnaire with one of three separate sets of instructions: Male, Female, or Adult. The Adult instructions read in part:

> Think of normal individuals and indicate on each item the side to which a mature, healthy, socially competent adult would be closer.

Ss receiving the Female instructions were asked to describe a mature, healthy, socially competent adult female, and Ss receiving the Male instructions were asked to describe a mature, healthy, socially competent adult male.

Data were collected from 126 teachers at several local schools. One-third of these teachers were from elementary schools, one-third from high schools, and one-third from colleges and universities. Recruiting Ss from several different schools at each level represented an attempt to control

for the effects of any particular school district's overall orientation concerning sex roles.

The analyses were carried out in two separate phases. The first phase consisted of a 3 x 3 (Instructions x Grade levels) fixed-effects factorial analysis of variance, and two subsequent comparison tests. The second phase employed three separate t tests to compare the differences between the means of male and female teachers for the three different instructions.

For both phases, the questionnaires were scored by assigning a value of +1 to each masculine pole chosen, and -1 to each feminine pole chosen. Thus, raw scores could conceivably vary from -38 for all stereotypically feminine responses, to +38 for a questionnaire on which the masculine pole was chosen every time. The 3 x 3 factorial analysis of variance was performed on the raw scores calculated in this manner and the results are presented in Table 1 of the handout. The means and standard deviations for each of the nine experimental groups are presented in Table 2 and in Figure 1.

The very highly significant F ratio associated with the varying of instructions on the Stereotype Questionnaire lends support to the main hypothesis of the study. It appears that within the present sample, at least, educators' judgments about the characteristics of healthy, mature individuals differ quite dramatically as a function of the sex of the person being judged.

The fact that the F ratio associated with the various grade levels of the teachers is not significant suggests that the stereotypes themselves are quite pervasive, and seem to exist in approximately equal strength at all levels of instruction.

The results of the overall F test seemed to call for a further, more detailed analysis to determine more precisely the exact location of differences, and to examine more thoroughly the stereotypic items themselves. To accomplish this, the mean score of all teachers who had responded to the Adult instructions was compared to the mean score of all teachers who had been given Male instructions, and then to the mean score of all teachers who had had Female instructions. The results of these comparisons appear in Table 3.

Considering the means of the Masculine, Adult, and Feminine Groups, it can be seen that educators' descriptions of a mature, socially competent adult male differ very little from their descriptions of a mature adult, while the

descriptions of a mature female differ quite a bit from the descriptions of a mature adult. The highly significant difference between the means of the Adult and the Feminine scores indicates that a double standard of health and maturity does exist for men and women. It would appear that a mature male compares favorably with a mature adult, but a mature female is perceiced as being somewhat less than a mature adult.

The second phase of the study was designed to deal with the sex of the teachers themselves. Until the present investigation women seemed to consistently agree with men in holding lower opinions of their own self-worth relative to men, and in perceiving their own sex role as being subordinate to that of men. The question of whether or not this is changing with the growing awareness of the inferior status accorded women in our society is indeed an interesting one. Three separate t tests were carried out in an effort to shed some light on this issue. The results of those tests are presented in Table 4 and in Figure 2.

It would appear from inspection of these data that men and women are still in close agreement concerning the characteristics of healthy, mature, socially competent adults and adult males. With regard to the current appraisal of adult females, however, female educators seem to be significantly ahead of their male colleagues in terms of giving up feminine sex-role stereotypes and the concomitant negative assessment of women. We might conclude that the growing women's movement in today's society is influencing women's self-perceptions more than it is changing men's attitudes toward women.

To summarize briefly, the results of this study support five general conclusions: (1) that a high degree of agreement exists among educators, at all levels of instruction, concerning the attributes which characterize healthy, mature, socially mature adults, adult males, and adult females; (2) that educators' concepts of health, maturity, and social competence differ for men and women; (3) that these differences parallel common sex-role stereotypes found by previous investigators; (4) that educators are significantly less likely to attribute characteristics which describe mature adults to a woman than they are likely to attribute these characteristics to a man; and (5) that female educators, while also describing women as somewhat less than mature adults, nevertheless do see women as coming significantly closer to the

adult standard than do male educators.

It is important to point out here that it is not stereotypes, per se, that are objectionable. Stereotypes, like other broad cognitions and generalizations, help us to simplify and categorize the enormous amounts of information we are all required to process. Rather than object to stereotypes, it is necessary to try to determine their accuracy and to assess their value in particular circumstances.

Once formed, sex-role stereotypes seem to be widely generalized to many diverse situations, and tend to be tenaciously held. Having adopted a stereotype an individual or group may pay less attention to new information, and may see instead only those things that tend to confirm the stereotype. It is this constraining effect of sex-role stereotypes that is particularly dis-functional in a modern society, and it is for this reason that the validity of the stereotypes we use must be carefully examined.

A great deal more research is needed to determine accurately those sex differences which are related to physiological or biological factors, and those which stem from social training. At present there is little convincing evidence that biologically based behaviors are responsible for a majority of the attributes which have been stereotypically assigned to men and to women. Attributes such as logical ability, objectivity, or independence are most certainly subject to great variability within either sex, and many women undoubtedly possess them in larger amounts than do a great many men. Numerous recent studies have demonstrated that women are at least as capable as men of persuing careers in almost any field they could choose. They are prevented from doing so, however, both by discrimination against them, and by their own reluctance to set such goals for themselves.

This is by no means to suggest that educators are responsible for the unequal treatment of women. Rather, their judgments can be assumed to reflect the sex-role stereotypes still prevalent in our society. Educators can, however, make a positive contribution to the elimination of restrictive sex-roles by becoming more aware of their own attitudes and the subtle differences in their expectations for male and female students that these attitudes may cause.